

# EXHIBIT

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Declaration of Peter C. Salerno  
In Support of Defendant Yassin Kadi's Motion  
To Exclude the Testimony of Victor Comras

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July 31, 2023

**Exhibit**  
**0989**

**The Charitable Crescent**  
Politics of Aid in the Muslim World

Jonathan Benthall  
and Jérôme Bellion-Jourdan

# The Charitable Crescent

Politics of Aid in the Muslim World



**Jonathan Benthall**  
and **Jérôme Bellion-Jourdan**

extending its anti-Zionism (which include a comprehensive anti-Judaism; d-Ghorayeb 2002: 134-86). Israel's presence in Lebanon in May 2000 was widely perceived to have increased its regional prestige. The Lebanese have noted in Egypt and Algeria that the government are filled by Islamist privateers. A shortage of water in parts of Beirut led to a 1989 protest against the Syrian presence in Lebanon. Water and electricity supplies in Beirut were cut off. Hizbullah's Jihad al Bina opened in Beirut. Lebanon, adorned with the Hizbullah flag, was led by ayatollahs. Through such initiatives, Hizbullah's organization is something 'larger than a party' (168). Recently commentators have noted that the experience of two decades of conflict would find it easy to adapt to a new political party and/or development.

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# WESTERN VERSUS ISLAMIC AID?\*

## International Muslim charities and humanitarian aid in Sudan

'The missionaries in Africa have brandished the motto that says "Give up the religion of Islam, and we will free you from hunger, poverty, fear and sickness" ... Armies of missionaries have crossed Africa with food in their left hands and crosses in their right hands.'<sup>1</sup> It was in these terms that the Sudanese organization Da'wa Islamiya depicted, in its 1995 report of 15 years of activities, the missionary danger, in order to justify the activity of *da'wa*, the call to Islam. The play of events in Sudan has strikingly illustrated the relationship between the politics of aid and the religious question. Since the end of the 1970s, the country has been the victim of serious 'humanitarian crises': it has been a refuge for the crowds of exiles who have fled from neighbouring countries at war, but it has also been at war itself since the resumption in 1983 of hostilities between the Southern Sudanese rebels – principally, the Sudanese People's Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A) – and the government in the North.

Before going on to analyse the question of aid in Sudan, we must dispose of two misunderstandings that have a wide currency. The first is that it was after the coup by Omar al-Bashir in June 1989, and the setting up of an Islamist regime directed by Hassan al-Turabi, that the Islamic question emerged as central to political debates in Sudan. On the contrary, Islam had had a strong presence in Sudanese politics since the nineteenth century, when the Khatmiya and the Mahdi movement had been rivals in the mobilization of religious symbolism for political ends. The Khatmiya was an order founded by Muhamad Osman al-Mirghani (1793-1853), inspired by the teaching of the Idrissiya order of the Hijaz in Arabia. This order, which supported the Turko-Egyptian regime, actively opposed the Mahdist revolutionary movement, opening up a political rivalry that was slow to burn out. The Mahdist movement also dates back to the nineteenth century. Muhamad Ahmad al-Mahdi, who came from a family belonging to the Samaniya fraternity, launched a revolutionary movement against British rule in 1881, and developed an autonomous movement of *ansar* (as in

\* by Jérôme Bellion-Jourdan

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## WESTERN VERSUS ISLAMIC AID

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Sudan became independent in 1956. The elite that had been created by Christian missionary education was relegated to second place in independent Sudan, and became a critical factor in the dispute with the North which led to the conflict. After independence, the activity of missionary societies was controlled by the Missionary Societies Act of 1962. But Makki contends that Western and Christian influence has continued, this time in the form of NGOs – aid being used as a weapon to impose Christianity or Western secularism on the populations of South Sudan (ib.: 117). Interviewed in 1996 in Khartoum, where he was director of a centre for research and translation in the African International University, the author of *The Christian Design* emphasized this historical perspective on the emergence of the Islamic NGOs. He recalled with pride the pioneering role of the Islamic Relief Agency in the conception of an international activity of 'Islamic relief' connected to a system of financial institutions and businesses.<sup>3</sup>

#### The development of an Islamist alternative to meet Christian competition

The historical reality is no doubt more complex than the above picture of the missionary record in Sudan would indicate. Memories of the missionary past are inevitably selective, but the point here is that they have been used to justify the launching of counter-programmes. Africa is considered a strategic zone for the expansion of Islam, and the location of Sudan is especially important. Different methods have been used to ensure the Muslim presence on the African continent. During the 1960s and 70s, the emphasis was on education and *da'wa*. From the beginning of the 80s, the strategy was adopted of penetrating the charitable sector so as not to leave African populations exclusively in the hands of Western organizations. But as we shall see, the relative consensus over the necessity of opposing Western projects did not lead to any unity of action, but resulted in competition among Muslim organizations: appeals to the principle of unity (*tawhid*) did not stand up to a reality that was fashioned by rival ambitions.

Investment in charitable organizations was one means towards this competitive penetration, but not the only one. In the 1960s, some states supported networks of Sufi fraternities in order to maintain influence in Africa; for instance, Egypt under Nasser built up close links with the Tijaniya fraternity, which was strongly entrenched in west Africa and whose leader, Ibrahim Niasse, was received by Nasser several times in Cairo.<sup>4</sup> It has been suggested that this link enabled the Egyptian president to increase his popularity in west Africa. In order not to be left out, and although its Wahhabi ideology was opposed to Sufi Islam, the Saudi state also supported these networks through offering educational and research bursaries (Kane 1997: 55-6).

From the 1960s onwards, Saudi-Arabia was active in seeking to develop networks favourable to itself on the African continent, particularly in East Africa, which was considered an 'Islamic frontier', the limit of the *umma* (Brenner 1993: 15). The Saudi influence was particularly manifest in the activities of the World Islamic League in education and *da'wa*, and in the support given to launching a number of Islamic institutions (Constantin 1993: 48-53).

Another step to further the interests of the Gulf States was the founding in 1967 in Khartoum of an African Islamic Centre, designed to mould an African elite as a counterweight to the Westernized or Christianized elites. Its activity was interrupted



*States:* the United Arab Emirates, with Ministry of Higher Education, and at at Shendi in the north; the state of K at Juba, and a mosque at Wau.

to power in May 1969, but it was the Ministry of Religious Affairs and the Institute of Islamic Education. With its aid, it was funded by Saudi-Arabia, Sudan and Morocco. In 1977, the centre expanded to Tanzania, Kenya, Uganda and Sudan. Meanwhile, the centre built up for research and publications (from 1982 it was responsible for material aid). In a coup of June 1989, the new regime transformed the centre into the International Islamic University. In 1996, the university was established on the African continent. Many received Da'wa Islamiya. According to the centre, it enabled African students to receive aid and monthly scholarships.<sup>5</sup>

#### Agency

The idea was to combine support from the Islamic African Relief Agency (IARA) and the Islamic Call (*munazamat ad-da'wa*). The agency's mission was to play a very active role in the rising presence of Islamic NGOs and to address the 'promise and peril of Islam'. The agency illustrates how 'Islamic relief' was a commitment to Islamic renewal and strong competition both at the national and international levels. It was founded in Khartoum in 1980 at the request of the regime to give his regime some Islamic legitimacy and an organization to specialize in

In 1980 were to work towards the implementation of the law [*shari'a*] in non-Muslim communities that are capable of accepting the word of God and the expression of the Islamic faith. It is thus the act of preaching the 'true Islam' and to non-Muslims. The publications of the organization were aimed at the *muhtadi* [convert, i.e. 'righteous'], the *al-risala* [the message], the agency's converts, accompanied by *qiyam* [voluntary character of conversion]. The aim of these organizations was to provide humanitarian aid to 'subvert' African societies and offer an alternative which would

not allow the missionaries to exploit African poverty and thus to 'impose' Christianity (El-Affendi 1990: 280).

Da'wa Islamiya's head office is in Khartoum, but it has an international dimension. Initially, its support came mainly from foreign countries, and its activities came to develop for the most part outside Sudan -- as is reflected in the composition of its directorate in 1982. Alongside Sudanese personalities, there were listed representatives of Gulf States (Saudi-Arabia, Kuwait, Qatar, Bahrain, the Emirates), either from ministries or from Islamic institutions which often placed themselves at the service of the foreign policies of host countries. Thus among the directors of Da'wa Islamiya were the secretary-general of the World Islamic League and his assistant, the former secretary-general of the World Assembly of Muslim Youth (Tawfiq al-Qasir, a professor at the University of Riyadh) and the head of the Kuwaiti agency Beit uz-Zakat.

The agency's funding followed a similar pattern. An element of rivalry arose between Libya and the providers of funds from the Gulf. Since the 'First of September Revolution' of 1969 that brought Muammar Gaddafi to power, Libya had been seeking to extend its influence in Africa. The Libyan *jama'iriya* ('state of the masses') had its own agencies for this purpose, such as Jami'yyat Da'wa Islamiya, based in Tripoli (Otayek 1986). The Sudanese Da'wa Islamiya seemed to Libya an opportunity to extend its influence, and so it was helped by support from Jami'yyat Da'wa Islamiya in Tripoli, towards the building of its headquarters in Khartoum.<sup>8</sup>

This Libyan initiative displeased the Gulf governments. At the time, Iranian influence was marginal on the African continent and provided no challenge to the hegemonic projects of the conservative Gulf states (Chouet 1994). By contrast, the revolutionary aspect of the Libyan programme worried these conservative regimes and most of all Saudi-Arabia. Gaddafi's Libya had established some distance between itself and Western countries, and was aligning itself with the Soviet Union (El-Kikhia 1997). In this context, Saudi-Arabia -- anti-communist and making use of Islam in its external relations -- was considered a guarantor of Western interests to protect the Red Sea region from Soviet influence, just as the Western powers also relied on the Shah of Iran in the Persian Gulf. In 1976, after the attempted coup in Sudan, an agreement to meet the challenge of Libyan subversion was signed between Sudan, Egypt and Saudi-Arabia (Otayek 1983: 10). The Islamic orientation of the Libyan regime was in danger of entering a competition with the Saudi ambition of monopolizing Islamic legitimacy in the world of Sunni Islam, which included Sudan and other African countries. The Saudi authorities were specially afraid that Libya would use Da'wa Islamiya to increase its influence in Chad, and so sought to outbid it financially.<sup>9</sup>

Very rapidly, the providers of funds from the Gulf came to dominate the financing of the activities of Da'wa Islamiya. The report for 1981-9 enables us to distinguish different types of investor who funded its operating programmes in Sudan:<sup>10</sup>

States: the United Arab Emirates, which financed the building of a mosque at the Ministry of Higher Education, and another in the military camp of the *ma'qil* [fort] at Shendi in the north; the state of Kuwait -- for the As-Sabah hospital for children at Juba, and a mosque at Wau.

*Charitable institutions:* the International Islamic Charitable Organization (Kuwait) – mosque in the village of Abu Ju in Jezira; the Africa Muslim Agency – two mosques:

After Nimeyri's coup in 1969, the opposition was severely repressed, and many officials such as Turabi were imprisoned. Others sought refuge abroad, including Sadiq al-Mahdi, leader of the Umma party, who was welcomed in Libya by his personal friend, Muammar Gaddafi (Otayek 1986: 40f.). The militant Islamists, who took the path of exile took advantage of this period to build up contacts

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overseas networks, for instance in import/export businesses, as potential support for later political activity.

When Nimayri proposed a policy of 'national reconciliation' on 27 May 1977, the Islamists seized the opportunity of this turning-point to play a role on the Sudanese political scene. On their side, after the return of their leader Sadiq al-Mahdi to Khartoum, the Mahdists played the game for a time, while the Khatmiya remained mistrustful.<sup>11</sup> The leader of the Islamic Charter Front, Hassan al-Turabi, was freed and agreed to assume some political responsibilities, then became attorney-general, in charge of justice. This period was also utilized to establish Islamic institutions in Sudanese society. Contacts made during the period of exile were mobilized to stimulate investment in Sudan.

There grew up an Islamic economic sector including banks and investment houses. One of these was the Faysal Islamic Bank, founded in May 1978 in Khartoum, of which a large minority stake was owned by Prince Muhammad Bin Faysal, the Saudi founder of the project and a personal friend of al-Turabi since the beginning of the 70s (Marchal 1995: 20). This bank set up subsidiaries such as the Islamic Insurance Society and the Islamic Investment Society (Ahmed 1997, Medani 1997). The climate was favourable for these institutions to flourish, for the Nimayri regime announced the application of *shari'a* in September 1983. Then on 9 December of the same year a committee set up by the President announced that no bank was authorized to operate a system of loan interest. The Muslim Brothers' control over economic institutions provoked the hostility of the Khatmiya, whose rich traders reacted to the success of the Faysal Islamic Bank by setting up in 1982 the Sudanese Islamic Bank in order to keep their monopoly over retail commerce (Ibrahim 1992: 45-9).

When Da'wa Islamiya was launched, various Sudanese political elements drawing their legitimacy from Islam sought to benefit from the organization's activities. Much was at stake. It was in fact a composite entity comprising a variety of institutions that were financially and administratively autonomous. Thus it was active in the investment sector with the Don Fodio Benevolent Foundation for Commerce and Contracting (*mu'assassa don fodio al-khairiya lil-tijara w l-muqawalat*), which operated in the import-export field and made investments in real estate, timber and textiles. Regarded as a 'welfare company', it was exempt from tax. The Don Fodio Foundation invested in Kenya, Nigeria and other foreign countries, as well as in Sudan, and it contributed 20 per cent to Da'wa Islamiya's budget.<sup>12</sup>

Da'wa Islamiya also invested in the African Council for Private Education, with schools aimed at the children of rich Sudanese and foreign diplomats in Khartoum; in a centre for research and training in *da'wa*; in media production studios;<sup>13</sup> and also in charitable works. To begin with, one branch was active in this field, the African Society for the Care of Mothers and Children (which later became independent). In 1981, the Islamic African Relief Agency (IARA – *al-nekalat al-islamiya al-ifriqiya lil-ighatha*) was founded.

It soon developed its activities at the international level, initially in many African countries but also in other continents, for instance in Peshawar during the Afghan war, under the name of ISRA. In a Da'wa Islamiya leaflet published in Arabic in 1985, IARA was described as 'the first relief organization of this kind on the African continent, amid an impressive number of foreign and evangelical agencies'. This

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of the Islamist movement were between the planning of *da'wa* and the *al-Nabi*, believed to be a principal as a member of the African Council and an office of his company in Sudan, and its first project was of financial financing, his company built the *umaitiya*: this project, designed for to act a project of Da'wa Islamiya's. The principal parties adopt Islam as a key. I assume that all the Sudanese were part of the Islamist tendency, such as some businessmen of *umaitiya* (supporters of the Prophet), not known for its direct political. Political confrontations could be within the elite. The marriage of the Transitional Islamic Front (NIF), to Wism al-Umma, was a prominent case of political leaders in a way that would

close to the al-Turabi tendency were Da'wa Islamiya. One was Ahmed, at the appeal court in Khartoum, apostasy of Mahmud Muhammad al-Republican Brothers. Taha, who had the independence of Sudan, had Islam, which remains today as

by the Islamists multiplied during. Islamiya became an issue in the against the Islamists in 1984. had acquired over the workings of Islamiya were arrested. When the organization recognized that beginning of the 80s, there was no tried to outlaw the organization, it sent to prison, not the activities collapsed in 1985 before the

of the Transitional Military Council, multi-party politics. Jazuli Dafallah, the first minister in an interim

government (Holt and Daly 1988: 217-225). Once their missions were carried out, both men moved from the sphere of politics to that of charity. Swar al-Dahab was appointed president of Da'wa Islamiya, and Jazuli Dafallah honorary president of the Islamic African Relief Agency. A simple calendrical coincidence? Dafallah's appointment is unsurprising, in that he was known for his closeness to the Muslim Brothers, which became public when he openly supported the Islamic laws adopted in 1983.

As for Swar al-Dahab, his career is more surprising. Coming from the Khatmiya, it appears that when he was president of the Transitional Military Council, the Islamists proposed a deal to him. If he would not abrogate the Islamic laws of 1983, they would give him the post of president of Da'wa Islamiya, which was prestigious but also of material significance. Certain sources suggest that the honorarium was some \$30,000 per month, in addition to the use of an official car. A different version has been given however by Nimayri himself, in an interview published in *Al-Wasat*.<sup>18</sup> Returning from his exile in Egypt to take part in presidential elections in Sudan in the autumn of 2000, the former president of Sudan is settling scores. He openly criticizes Swar al-Dahab, whom he had named Minister of Defence just before his departure for the United States for medical consultations, which the minister made use of to effect a coup. Nimayri calls Swar al-Dahab a coward (*jaban*) and claims that he had also appointed him as 'the head of the Islamic relief agency'. Whichever version of the facts is true, both are evidence of the strategic and coveted status of the directorship of Da'wa Islamiya – a position which also allowed al-Dahab to take the number two position in the Cairo-based World Islamic Council for Da'wa and Relief (see p.75), founded in 1988 and headed by the Sheikh Al-Azhar. Da'wa Islamiya was more and more at the heart of the political battle, even if it is hard to determine how much real control of the organization was exercised by the Islamists.

When the leader of the Umma party, Sadiq al-Mahdi, became prime minister in 1986, the Islamists of the NIF, led by al-Turabi, strengthened by their relative electoral success, claimed a share of power and set their conditions.<sup>19</sup> A new power struggle set in, between Da'wa Islamiya and the government, dominated by the Umma party. Sadiq al-Mahdi had welcomed the foundation of the agency: during the Nimayri period, he had taken part in meetings of its managing board, and considered it a means to attract external Arab finance to counterbalance the influence of Western NGOs in dealing with Sudan's humanitarian problems. Some years later, Da'wa Islamiya was treated by Sadiq al-Mahdi as an instrument in the service of the competing Islamist party, the NIF. 'We took a negative attitude', said the head of the Umma party in an interview in Khartoum in May 1996, 'when we noticed that they were not sincere in their humanitarian activities, using the resources for the purposes of the political confrontation'.<sup>20</sup> The attorney-general outlawed the organization in 1986, but its jurists were successful in having the decision annulled for want of legal proof. Was it the Umma party's aim in doing this to destabilize the NIF? In 1996, at a meeting at his house in Omdurman, Sadiq al-Mahdi acknowledged this readily and said he regretted having failed to do so. Did the Umma party have its sights set on Da'wa Islamiya? That is what the secretary-general of the organization asserted: he suspected the Umma party of having seen in the agency 'a type of popular activity that could be useful to it' for domestic political ends, and that the other political side, the NIF, should not benefit from. According



to Dr Al-Amin, the Umma party had been trying 'to get its hands' on every organization in Sudan.<sup>21</sup>

International to begin with, Da'wa Islamiya came more and more to be thought of as an instrument of the NIF's on the domestic political scene in Sudan – what obviously upset the other political formations. Ironically, the agency's leaders replied to criticisms – both from the Nimayri and the Sadiq al-Mahdi regimes – precisely by emphasizing that the international character of the organization was proof that it could not be the tool of any domestic political agenda. In an interview published in *Sudanow* in 1985, Mubarak Qasmallah, its director, stated that

the agency is not part of the Muslim Brothers at all. It is an international agency belonging to all Muslims, wherever they are and whatever their political orientation. Thus, what Nimayri did surprised me deeply, because it was he who, in 1980, exerted himself to convince the conference members that its headquarters should be in Sudan. ... All the funding comes from outside Sudan.<sup>22</sup>

In reality, the external funding did not mean that the agency's policies derived from a truly international dimension: the process of 'NIFization' of the agency which began in the 1980s was reinforced after the June 1989 coup which brought Omar al-Bashir to power.

The initial project of *da'wa* was far from disappearing; but the power struggle between those who defined Da'wa Islamiya's policies was moving on. External investment in the service of *da'wa* in Africa was channelled by a local political force. Displaced from power by the 30 June 1989 coup, Sadiq al-Mahdi was free in his criticism of the 'politicization' of the agency – which he had not been able to capture for his own party. Here is what he told me in 1996:

They succeeded in grasping the resources of rich Muslims from Saudi-Arabia and Kuwait ... who considered it a duty to work for the islamization of Sudan's non-Muslims. The NIF appealed to them as follows: 'If you put your resources in our hands, we will be able to convert the non-Muslims of Sudan, and indeed of Africa'. That was the pretext ... for grasping resources which they proceeded to use for another purpose. By politicizing these agencies, they involved them in the political confrontation, at the risk of weakening them and putting their future in doubt.<sup>23</sup>

Thus Da'wa Islamiya gradually became a partisan organization, made use of both in Sudan and in its transnational networks. In the Sudan of the 1980s, it was one means among others to establish the influence of the NIF. And in common with some other organizations, it was clearly seen at the time as an organization in the service of NIF, a true lever of power behind the scenes. Rumour says that it was in the studios of Da'wa Islamiya in the Ryad quarter of Khartoum that the president recorded his first televised address announcing the successful coup.

#### After June 1989: the nation first, or Islamism first?

After the coup by General Omar al-Bashir on 30 June 1989 which overturned Sadiq al-Mahdi, the new regime's Islamist orientation became clear in the ensuing months (Marchal 1992, Sidahmed 1997). Even if al-Bashir did not flaunt any sympathy for the Islamists, it turned out to be the men of the NIF in the shadows who held the true reins of the new power. Though he occupied no official position until his

election as parliamentary Speaker, the 'eminence' of the new regime. The People's Conference, with his platform for Islamism and Arabism, every effort had to be made to the social welfare sector was critical. The resources that had been mobilized were making progress along the line to make available enough resources for the waqf, which are collective assets of the 'system of social welfare' (al-Turabi). The Islamic tradition of good works, to make possible a programme of economic and political power.<sup>24</sup> The zakat levy, characterized as jihad in order to liberate the *shahidin* and the casualties martyrs of the popular defence forces (Baillan).

In this context, the denunciation of the foreigner served to justify the use of the resources of NGOs or international aid in the name of the defence of Islamism, which threatened Sudan again in the name of wanting to use international aid.

Some people want to use the aid to tie our hands. It is preferable that we allow the international crusade against famine as long as we are an Islamic organization to do what they want. Islamic Revolution in the South.

In language less inflamed but still the Relief Agency (IARA/ISRA), international NGOs which he had a policy which he wittily described as a policy of influence like the Allies. Analysis of Abdallah Suleyman in the Nardofan region, Oxfam's was in the north, and World Vision's the south.

It would be a mistake to see in humanitarianism, especially when it indicates the viewpoint of those who are more of a bad turn than a good turn, a defence of culture and sovereignty in the service of local strategies to counter other words, the vaunted objectives of the agencies; but in practice, it was only the Islamist tendency that were



RESCENT

## WESTERN VERSUS ISLAMIC AID

121

trying 'to get its hands' on every

ame more and more to be thought of as a political scene in Sudan – which ironically, the agency's leaders replied, was the organization was proof that its agenda. In an interview published by the agency, he stated that

all. It is an international agency whatever their political orientation. Because it was he who, in 1980, established its headquarters should be in Sudan.<sup>22</sup>

that the agency's policies derived from its of 'NIFization' of the agency after the June 1989 coup which brought

appearing; but the power struggle between the NIF and the military was moving on. External support, channelled by a local political force, Sadiq al-Mahdi was free in his country as he had not been able to capture

Muslims from Saudi-Arabia and the Islamization of Sudan's non-Muslims. You put your resources in our country, Sudan, and indeed of Africa', which they proceeded to use for their own purposes. They involved them in the political process, putting their future in doubt.<sup>23</sup>

organization, made use of both the NIF and the military. In Sudan of the 1980s, it was one of the NIF. And in common with the time as an organization in the Sudan. Rumour says that it was in the shadows of Khartoum that the president's successful coup.

the 1989 which overturned Sadiq al-Mahdi. It was clear in the ensuing months that he did not flaunt any sympathy for the NIF. In the shadows who held the NIF in no official position until his

election as parliamentary Speaker in 1996, Hassan al-Turabi was considered the 'grey eminence' of the new regime. In April 1991, he founded the Arab and Islamic People's Conference, with himself as secretary-general, which was intended to be a platform for Islamist and Arab nationalist movements. For this Islamist ideologue, every effort had to be made to further the 'civilizing' project of islamization. The social welfare sector was critical. In an interview given in 1997, al-Turabi welcomed the resources that had been mobilized to support this policy: 'Gradually, in Sudan, we are making progress along the road of total islamization. As the state does not make available enough resources for this responsibility to be taken up, zakat and waqf, which are collective assets according to Muslim ideas, allow us to support a system of social welfare' (al-Turabi 1997: 166). These financial levies, justified by the Islamic tradition of good works, would be used to top up state taxation and thus make possible a programme of extensive control of society, and hence of retaining political power.<sup>24</sup> The zakat levy would also assist the war effort, a war openly characterized as jihad in order to gain support for it, in which the combatants were *mujahidin* and the casualties martyrs, a war to be fought both by a regular army and by popular defence forces (Baillard and Haenni 1997: 83, Sidahmed 2002).

In this context, the denunciation of international humanitarian aid as the hand of the foreigner served to justify the maintenance of policies for controlling the work and/or resources of NGOs or international agencies. This denunciation was made in the name of the defence of Islam and/or the nation. At the time of the famine which threatened Sudan again in 1991, al-Turabi castigated those whom he accused of wanting to use international aid to interfere with Sudan's international affairs:

Some people want to use the drop in agricultural production, due to the drought, to tie our hands. It is preferable that several thousands of people should die rather than allow the international crusade to come to our help. ... We will never declare a famine as long as we are an Islamic nation. ... We will never allow international aid organizations to do what they want in our country and to oppose the plans of the Islamic Revolution in the South.<sup>25</sup>

In language less inflamed but similar in content, the president of Islamic African Relief Agency (IARA/ISRA), interviewed in Khartoum in 1996, denounced the international NGOs which he had suspected since the 1980s of contributing to a policy which he wittily described as a 'Sudanese Yalta' – aiming to divide Sudan into zones of influence like the Allies in 1944. According to the deliberately provocative analysis of Abdallah Suleyman al-Awad, CARE's sphere of influence was the Kordofan region, Oxfam's was the west, ADRA's (Adventist Relief Agency) the north, and World Vision's the south.<sup>26</sup>

It would be a mistake to see in these opinions a hostility to the very principle of humanitarianism, especially when the speaker is head of a relief agency. But they indicate the viewpoint of those who condemned any use of humanitarian aid that did more of a bad turn than a good turn to their own interests. Legitimate arguments, in defence of culture and sovereignty put at risk by humanitarian aid, were deployed in the service of local strategies to control the activities of international agencies. In other words, the vaunted objective was to encourage the activities of Sudanese agencies; but in practice, it was often those agencies, Sudanese or international, near to the Islamist tendency that were the ones to profit from this policy.

After the model of the Missionary Societies Act of 1962 which aimed to control missionary activities, measures to control international NGOs had already been taken under the government of Sadiq al-Mahdi (1986-9). This process intensified after the coming to power of Omar al-Bashir in 1989. When questioned about these measures, Ghazi Salah Eddine Atabani, an influential official in the NIF and then president of the National Congress, defended them by invoking two principles consistent with themes that were being developed on the international scene: reaffirming the sovereignty of the state, and showing preference for local organizations.<sup>27</sup>

It was thus in the name of respect for national sovereignty that the Sudanese government laid down conditions for the implementation of Operation Lifeline Sudan (OLS). Set up in April 1989, this was an arrangement supervised by the United Nations for coordinating relief to populations affected by the war that had been fought since 1983 between the government in northern Sudan and rebel movements in the South. The arrangement provided for activities in the northern sector being supervised by the authorities in Khartoum, while coordination of cross-frontier activities in the southern sector would be the responsibility of Unicef's office in Kenya (Karim 1996).

In the same way, it was officially to encourage local organizations that the Humanitarian Affairs Commission (HAC – a merger in 1996 of the Relief and Rehabilitation Commission and the Commission for Voluntary Agencies) was entrusted with a precise task of controlling the voluntary organizations operating in Sudan. Thus, the Country Agreement signed in 1993 made the continued operation of international agencies – work permits, import of goods, access to displaced persons' camps – conditional on their forming partnerships by 'twinning' with Sudanese organizations.

If this policy of twinning soon proved unrealistic (Karim 1996: 50 and 97-8), the growth of local organizations, encouraged by the government, showed tangible results. New organizations were founded such as the Foundation for Peace and Development, while existing agencies, particularly Da'wa Islamiya and Islamic African Relief Agency, experienced a new lease of life.

Whether coincidentally or not, the suspicion expressed with regard to the international agencies, especially since 1989, corresponded to an increase in the number of international Islamic relief agencies working in northern Sudan.<sup>28</sup> These included the British-based agencies Islamic Relief and Muslim Aid, the International Islamic Relief Organization (IIRO) and Lejnet al-Bir al-Dawliya (Committee for International Charity) from Saudi-Arabia, the Africa Muslim Agency from Kuwait, as well as the Muwaffaq al-Kheiriya with its headquarters in Jersey – all of which opened offices in Khartoum and developed programmes in various regions after the beginning of the 1990s. As the executive manager of Muwaffaq al-Kheiriya admitted in an interview in 1996, the launch of an office in Khartoum had been facilitated by the authorities: Muwaffaq al-Kheiriya were granted facilities such as a building plot for an office, exemption from customs and taxes, and free transportation of relief to the South.<sup>29</sup> Thus the Islamist critique of international practices of humanitarian aid was of benefit to other practices of humanitarian aid – local or international, but Islamist.

**Criticisms of Islamist use of**  
In Khartoum, there were many organizations, which vigorously criticized government authorities and Islam in Khartoum, Toby Maduot, Society Dinka Rek, painted a picture of governmental policy of the 'Muslims in the South' and reception for displaced persons was part of this strategy: the 'Islam of the NIF', and 'food is used to Islam'.<sup>30</sup> An even harsher analysis was given by the Sudan Council of Churches, a thirteen member churches, in the service of the NIF which sought to Islamize the South. He said that the Islamic hands which are in power was part of a broader aim to 'fill the vacuum' motivated by religion and are pagans'.<sup>32</sup>

External observers have also criticized the political aims. Some have taken issue with the Christians, as in the case of *South Sudan: Chronicle of a forced conversion*. Maliqalim Simone, the police chief, noted that the populations from their temporary camps on the outskirts of the capital, 'preaching converting to Islam' (Simone 1999: 31). Seeing an Africanization of Islam, the United States ambassador to Khartoum, on various occasions the alignment of Islam was allowed to fly to the South. In September 1993 he went to Khartoum where 95,000 displaced persons were noted that there were no international agencies in the vicinity of the town had been the responsibility of one of the first Islamic officials whispered to him that the Islamic officials (Malakal) were using relief supplies for their own purposes (Pettersen 1999: 31).

On the question of islamization, the government forced and the voluntary conversion would be needed to better the situation and providers, after the model showed how aid is sometimes

s Act of 1962 which aimed to control international NGOs had already been introduced (1986-9). This process intensified in 1989. When questioned about these influential official in the NIF and threatened them by invoking two principles developed on the international scene: aid and showing preference for local

national sovereignty that the Sudanese implementation of Operation Lifeline was an arrangement supervised by the populations affected by the war that had government in northern Sudan and rehabilitation provided for activities in the north. Khartoum, while coordination of cross-border aid should be the responsibility of UNICEF.

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tion expressed with regard to the corresponded to an increase in the working in northern Sudan.<sup>28</sup> The Relief and Muslim Aid, the International al-Bir al-Dawliya (Committee for Africa Muslim Agency from Kuwait), headquarters in Jersey – all of which programmes in various regions after the order of Muwaffaq al-Kheiriya administration in Khartoum had been facilitated by these facilities such as a building programme, and free transportation of relief supplies. International practices of humanitarian aid – local or international, local

### Criticisms of Islamist use of humanitarian aid

In Khartoum, there were many criticisms of the Islamist control over aid, voiced sometimes by the staff of international NGOs and often by Christian Sudanese organizations, which vigorously denounced the close collaboration between the government authorities and Islamic organizations. In an interview conducted in 1996 in Khartoum, Toby Maduot, president of the Sudan Democratic Forum and the Society Dinka Rek, painted a picture of the Islamic NGOs as surrogates for the governmental policy of the North, serving the interests of the 'war against non-Muslims in the South' and working to convert them. For him, the policy of reception for displaced persons in the camps set up in the outskirts of Khartoum was part of this strategy: the Islamic agencies put the displaced persons 'at the mercy of the NIF', and 'food is used as a weapon to convert as many people as possible to Islam'.<sup>30</sup> An even harsher analysis was given to me by the secretary-general of the Sudan Council of Churches (SCC), a federal institution set up in 1967 with some thirteen member churches.<sup>31</sup> According to Rev. Enoch Tombe, the NGOs were in the service of the NIF which sought to prolong the war in order to be able to islamize the South. He said that 'Christian communities are bound to lose members in the Islamic hands which are protected by the government'. According to him, the policy was part of a broader aim, the islamization of Africa, deriving from a duty to 'to fill the vacuum' motivated by the strong assumption that 'Africans have no religion and are pagans'.<sup>32</sup>

External observers have also emphasized the practice of islamization and its political aims. Some have taken sides and become spokesmen for the sufferings of the Christians, as in the case of Jacques Monnot's book, whose very title, *The drama of South Sudan: Chronicle of a forced islamization*, is expressive (Monnot 1994). For Abdou Maliqalim Simone, the policy of 1991-2 consisted of dislodging the displaced populations from their temporary residence in Khartoum to put them in camps in the outskirts of the capital, 'providing special food relief and employment to those converting to Islam' (Simone 1994: 68), and this was due to the regime's fear of seeing an Africanization of Khartoum develop. As for Donald Petterson, United States ambassador to Khartoum between 1992 and 1994, he was able to observe on various occasions the alignment of certain NGOs with government policy. Petterson was allowed to fly to the 'transition zone' between North and South. On 27 September 1993 he went to Malakal (500 miles south of Khartoum) where there were 95,000 displaced persons with nothing but their clothes, some very sick. He noted that there were no international NGOs present and that 'the area in the vicinity of the town had been divided into five parts, each of which was the responsibility of one of the five Sudanese NGOs working there'. He reports that a local official whispered to him that 'the Islamic NGOs (four of the five NGOs at Malakal) were using relief supplies as a tool to Islamize people in the camps' (Petterson 1999: 31).

On the question of islamization, it is not always easy to distinguish between the forced and the voluntary conversions. Thorough field research with the recipients of aid would be needed to better understand their relations with the various different aid providers, after the model of Barbara Harrell-Bond's pioneering study which showed how aid is sometimes imposed on beneficiaries (Harrell-Bond 1986). The



After the attacks on US embassies was again singled out; the United States the outskirts of Khartoum. However, normalization. To prove its engagement September 2001 attacks on New York submitted a detailed report in December set up under Resolution 1373 (2001) report is a letter from the President of the attacks to his American counterparts strongly condemn all acts of terrorism: Sudan, and the international community authorities set out in this 47 page document terrorism', their close cooperation with the results of an enquiry conducted by the delegation that Usama bin Laden, Islamic Bank, a leading Islamic firm Sudan's signs of conduct seem to have seems to have been enough to give through some major figures in the Sudan has changed, and criticism has

In order to help us escape the ready-made 'Islamic', three points may be of assistance between the groups and representatives of a correct concept been reflected in competition between the partisans of Sadiq al-Mahdi's Umma has continued to intensify. When influence over Da'wa Islamiya or the other charitable organization. In a well-informed study published by A

The question of the political and religious use of aid must be considered in context. Often, Islamic NGOs are denounced by other organizations that do not wish to be marginalized. Among others, the Sudan Council of Churches (SCC) complained about the contrast between the privileges given by the state to Islamic organizations and the obstacles put in the way of organizations linked to the SCC, such as SUDRA and SUDANAID.<sup>34</sup> But this denunciation derived from the strategy of an organization that was suffering from not being allowed to implement its missionary programme freely. The constitution of the Sudan Council of Churches



special difficulties for any researcher:

asked to visit the Jabal Awliya camp, along with another, Dar as-Salam) on the way. I had an authority to take photographs of Culture. Families were surviving, totally dependent on humanitarian aid. IARA, Sudanese Red Crescent, three of them Islamic international (Islamic Agency), as well as MSF Holland. Everything seemed to be done by the agencies, of whom it was said that clinics and feeding centres run by IARA.

ained to me that his organization discussed a particular given project. clear-cut. For instance, in order to leading in the camp, IARA had put the distribution of condoms supplies as a problem with lack of stocks. The means of prevention. The administration sent a message about sound moral or more directly in the case of the 'animists'. Thus material aid was also to be found in IARA from practising female excision. me from Kordofan and Darfur. When I asked to speak with some, we were short of time, and we got back. I had been allowed to sound out that they would probably have hesitated.

use of aid must be considered in the Sudan Council of Churches (SCC) privileges given by the state to Islamic organizations linked to the SCC. renunciation derived from the state being allowed to implement its work of the Sudan Council of Churches.

provided in fact for the organization 'to assist the members of the Churches in the extension of God's Kingdom by spreading the Good News of Salvation'.<sup>35</sup>

Sometimes, the aid providers found themselves at the heart of international political matters. Thus, after the attempt on the Egyptian president Hosni Mubarak's life in Addis Ababa in June 1995, the spotlight turned to the Khartoum regime, which was under suspicion of serving as a rear base for international 'terrorism' with an Islamist orientation. Furthermore, some aid suppliers were suspected of giving cover to these activities. For instance, the newsletter *Africa Confidential* sought to demonstrate a 'Khartoum connection', noting in its issue for 7 July 1995 that one of the people arrested by the Ethiopian authorities was a Sudanese working for the organization Muwafaq al-Kheiriya, described as a 'NIF agency'.<sup>36</sup> This resulted in a lawsuit against *Africa Confidential*. Interviewed in Khartoum in 1996, the executive manager of the organization, Sirag Al-Din Abdul Bari, denied the allegations and emphasized its international and humanitarian character.<sup>37</sup> But this episode cost the Khartoum regime a United Nations resolution.

After the attacks on US embassies in Tanzania and Kenya in August 1998, Sudan was again singled out: the United States launched a missile on a medicine factory on the outskirts of Khartoum. However, with time there has been progress towards normalization. To prove its engagement in the 'war against terrorism' after the 11 September 2001 attacks on New York and Washington, the Sudanese government submitted a detailed report in December 2001 to the Counter-Terrorism Committee set up under Resolution 1373 (2001) of the UN Security Council. Annexed to the report is a letter from the President of Sudan, Omar al-Bashir, addressed on the day of the attacks to his American counterpart, George W. Bush, to remind him that 'we strongly condemn all acts of terrorism, reaffirming our willingness to cooperate with you, and the international community, to combat all acts of terrorism'. The Sudanese authorities set out in this 47 page document the measures taken by them to combat 'terrorism', their close cooperation with the American government services, and the results of an enquiry conducted by the Sudanese Central Bank, rebutting the allegation that Usama bin Laden was a founder and shareholder of Al-Shamal Islamic Bank, a leading Islamic financial institution in Sudan.<sup>38</sup> Thus with time, Sudan's signs of conduct seem to have paid off. Hassan al-Turabi's marginalization seems to have been enough to give the appearance of a less Islamist regime, even though some major figures in the movement remain in key posts. The image of Sudan has changed, and criticism has become less virulent.

#### Humanitarian politics and pragmatism win out over ideological differences

In order to help us escape the ready-made binary opposition of 'Western/Christian' and 'Islamic', three points may be made in conclusion. First, competition has been intense between the groups and movements presenting themselves as legitimate representatives of a correct conception of Islam. This considerable diversity has been reflected in competition between Islamic aid organizations. The rivalry between the partisans of Sadiq al-Mahdi's Umma party and the Hassan al-Turabi tendency has continued to intensify. When the officials of the Umma party lost hope of influence over Da'wa Islamiya or the IARA after the June 1989 coup, they founded another charitable organization. In an interview carried out in March 1997 for the well-informed study published by African Rights, Nasr al-Din al-Hadi al-Mahdi, of

the Umma party, spoke of the recent foundation of the Sudanese Communist Islamic Relief Organization, based in Saudi-Arabia. The Umma party thus hoped to redirect the donations of Sudanese expatriates, including zakat contributions, by offering them an alternative to the Islamic organizations working in the zone controlled by the Sudanese NIF (African Rights 1997: 195-6).

A second point is that, as well as confrontation, some processes of cooperation, even of hybridization, may be observed. A striking case is the strategies implemented by the Islamic [African] Relief Agency (IARA-ISRA), based in Khartoum. For IARA-ISRA, the search for support from NGOs and international organizations began in the 1980s. The career of Abdallah Suleyman al-'Awad, the founder, later chairman of the agency, is an example of hybridization. A medical doctor by training and a militant Islamist, he was for many years employed in Alexandria at the Eastern Mediterranean Regional Office of the World Health Organization. As he explained himself in an interview conducted in 1996, this position enabled him to assimilate the culture of an international organization and appreciate all the advantages that would accrue to his new organization from participation in the various consortia of international NGOs. At the same time, giving some humanitarian legitimacy to his organization enabled it to avoid the accusations that were directed against Dar al-Islamiya, of which IARA was initially a branch – that it was making use of humanitarian aid for political purposes.

Declaring that he preferred 'field dialogue' to 'intellectual dialogue between Islam and Christianity', Abdallah Suleyman al-'Awad tried from early on to convince Christian or Western agencies to work with him, reminding them that as Christians they wanted to help the poor, just as Muslims wanted to help the poor.<sup>39</sup> Seeking to implement the idea of twinning with international NGOs, the IARA worked in partnership on specific projects with agencies such as World Vision, the Lutheran Federation, Oxfam, ADRA and MSF Holland. It proved more difficult, according to al-'Awad, to work with the French MSF. Sometimes, IARA obtained public funding. For instance, in 1998 the Islamic American Relief Agency (also using the abbreviation IARA), a sister agency of the Sudanese one, was awarded two grants from the US Agency for International Development (USAID), totalling \$4.2 million for projects in Mali. (In December 1999, the US State Department decided to suspend this grant in the context of investigation into the armed attacks in 1993 at the World Trade Center and in 1998 against the American embassies in Nairobi and Dar as-Salaam. The director of IARA-USA stated in his defence that his agency, registered since 1984 in Columbia, Missouri, had nothing to do with Sudan and had never been accused of activities linked to 'terrorism'. He announced his intention to appeal against the decision.)<sup>40</sup>

Furthermore, having been granted consultative status with the UN Economic and Social Council (UNECOSOC), IARA worked with UN agencies such as the High Commissioner for Refugees or Unicef. Finally, al-'Awad played a key role in enabling his agency to become an active member of international NGO forums. He helped found the Forum of African Voluntary and Development Organizations (FAVDO) in Dakar and was vice-president for a time. Proud of having enabled a 'Third World organization' to be admitted to the International Council of Voluntary Agencies (ICVA) in Geneva, he became a member of ICVA's executive council in 1986 and vice-chairman in 1990.

A third point: what may be called an organization can lead it, perhaps in a position with regard to the Islamic Relief Agency (IARA-ISRA) distanced itself from the policies made fund-raising for the Islamic Relief Agency in Birmingham in 1996, Abdul Samad al-'Awad, told the following story to account of all that was being said by Christians in Sudan. Summers, who was on a visit to Bosnia to evaluate the questions of devout Christians who were in Sudan: about the massacres of Christians and about children captured in the Sudan. Following this exchange, al-'Awad stayed in Khartoum to raise the matter and enquired of the general, what he had to work with. He explained that he had to work with a group that was subjected to discrimination in Sudan. In conclusion, though many different forms of humanitarian aid, the elements of whatever the principles justify support. Like their Christian or Western counterparts, they follow the rules of communication.

RESCENT

WESTERN VERSUS ISLAMIC AID

127

lation of the Sudanese Community. The Umma party thus hoped to include zakat contributions, by organizations working in the zones (1997: 195-6).

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A third point: what may be called the transition to humanitarianism of an Islamist organization can lead it, perhaps unexpectedly, to adopt a pragmatic and critical position with regard to the Islamist project. Thus, ISRA-UK (the UK branch of IARA-ISRA) distanced itself from the Khartoum regime because the regime's policies made fund-raising for the humanitarian agency difficult. Interviewed in Birmingham in 1996, Abdul Samad Summers, manager of the organization's British branch, told the following story to illustrate the prejudice felt against his agency on account of all that was being said in the media about the predicament of the Christians in Sudan. Summers, while accompanying an official of the Methodist Church on a visit to Bosnia to evaluate a joint project in Tuzla, had to reply to the questions of devout Christians who were concerned by information coming from Sudan: about the massacres of Christian priests, about Christian believers crucified, and about children captured in the South of Sudan, taken to the North and forcibly converted. Following this exchange, Abdul Samad Summers took the opportunity of a stay in Khartoum to raise the matter with a Sudanese army general. He said that he had enquired of the general, what was all this about people being crucified? He explained that he had to work with different groups worldwide: if the Churches were subjected to discrimination in Sudan, it raised a serious problem for fund-raising.

In conclusion, though many differences may be identified between different forms of humanitarian aid, the element of pragmatism seems to be common to them all. Whatever the principles justifying a project, it can only be realized if it gets support. Like their Christian or Western equivalents, Islamic relief agencies must bow to the rules of communication and marketing.